



March 18, 2009

The Honorable Frank LoBiondo
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative LoBiondo:

KidsPeace, established in 1882, is a time-tested non-profit national children's charity dedicated to meeting the mental health needs of children facing crises in their young lives. KidsPeace directly serves 3,000 children each day through 50 locations in eleven states and the District of Columbia along a spectrum of services that includes psychiatric inpatient hospitalization, residential and educational services, therapeutic foster care, and community-based programs.

As part of the current continuum of care, KidsPeace operates 40 therapeutic foster care programs, widely acknowledged by experts as the most successful and positive foster care program. The *therapeutic foster care* provided by KidsPeace is distinguished from other programs in the foster care field: (1) Children have psychiatric diagnoses and display exceptional emotional and behavioral needs, requiring more intensive and individualized care; (2) KidsPeace foster families are specially trained, certified, and supported to care for children with severe emotional and behavioral challenges and generally care for no more than two foster children in a home at a time; and (3) KidsPeace staff carry a case load of eight or fewer foster children, allowing a minimum of weekly visits to the foster home and 24-hour, seven-day-a-week support to foster families.

KidsPeace is experienced in providing therapeutic foster care at the highest quality, as evidenced by proven outcomes: 80% of children discharged from KidsPeace therapeutic foster homes in 2008 entered less restrictive settings, indicating that their mental health needs were addressed and their behavioral symptoms reduced and three out of every four children discharged entered a permanent setting.

Based on current demographics in similar KidsPeace therapeutic foster care programs in various areas of the country, the program is expected to serve an estimated 50 children and 120 community members (including biological and foster family members) each year. The program will staff approximately 12 professionals once fully developed.

KidsPeace respectfully requests your consideration of the inclusion of a **\$400,000 earmark for KidsPeace in the FY 2010 Commerce, Justice, Science bill, OJP, Part E account to be used as start-up funding to establish a KidsPeace therapeutic foster care program in Cumberland County.** This request reflects one-time only, start-up funds. KidsPeace will provide an additional 16% or \$64,000 to underwrite the administrative expenses that will be incurred during the development phase of this project. The program will be self-sustainable within the first eighteen months of operation and will require no federal funding past the start-up phase for ongoing operational expenses.

Federal funding of this program will address a critical triplicate need: (1) providing alternative, community-based placement to children previously involved with or at risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system; (2) addressing the psychiatric needs of children in the social service system who have mental health diagnoses; and (3) providing safe and supportive homes to children in the foster care system.

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice has identified the most successful mental health programs as those that treat juvenile offenders within families and local communities, specifically because they reduce recidivism up to 80%, using preventative measures to avoid repeat offenders and increasing public safety. Furthermore, according to the Task Force on Community Preventive Services, appointed by the Centers for Disease Control, therapeutic foster care has been shown to reduce violent crimes among adolescents ages 12 to 18 with a history of chronic delinquency an average of 70%.

Therapeutic foster care is not only an effective and healthy alternative placement for youth, but it is cost-effective as well. ***In fact, for every dollar spent on therapeutic foster care, \$14 is saved in court and corrections system costs. Therefore, a \$400,000 one-time investment in therapeutic foster care can potentially save New Jersey and the federal government \$5.6 million.*** KidsPeace received federal appropriations through CJS, OJP Part E for start-up of therapeutic foster care programs in other regions of the country in FY 2008 and FY 2006.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to the opportunity to work with you on this important project.

Sincerely,



William Iseman
President & CEO

cc: Lance Seibenhener, Office of Rep. Frank LoBiondo

